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EARNEST and AFFECTIONATE

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ADDRESS

To the People called

METHODISTS.

The FOURTH EDITION.



L O N D O N :

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*An Earnest and Affectionate ADDRESS
to the People called METHODISTS.*

*My dear Brethren, and
Fellow-Christians.*

THE following Address has no other motives but a real regard to the honour of our most holy religion, and a desire to promote the peace and welfare of society, your own private interests and comfort, and the happiness of your precious and immortal souls. It comes from a person who has been long grieved to see so much honesty and well-meaning, as I yet believe and hope to be among you, so greatly imposed upon; to find you ignorantly going on in serving the designs of Enthusiasm, and in giving credit to the most extravagant and groundless Pretences.

Many things have been written in the controversial way against these. But it is to be feared, you have been discouraged and hindered from reading them; and some points thus debated, may be thought in general above your capacities.

4 *An Address to the People*

There seems therefore still to be wanting a short and plain application to yourselves. Such a one I am now set down to write to you. And I earnestly beseech Almighty God to enable me to write to your hearts and consciences; that these papers may have the good effect desired and intended, that they may give you a just sight and sense of the disorders and errors you have been led into, and recover you to the practice of your duty, agreeably to the circumstances divine Providence has placed you in.

And surely, my brethren, a letter wrote on so very important a subject, and to so happy an end, will be read and considered by you with all seriousness and attention. Surely, you will not frustrate these endeavours for your advantage and happiness, by any perverseness in refusing to peruse these sheets: or in doing this in a cursory and negligent manner; which must come to the same, and can have no better effect. The least you can do, is to listen and attend to such considerations and advices, proposed and offered out of a principle of the truest, of *christian* friendship. If you will not do this, you must not expect to be thought serious and impartial men.

men. But if you will do it, I shall hope to see some stop put to the progress of error and delusion. I do not say this out of any high opinion of my own abilities, but trusting in the goodness of our cause, and in the sincerity of my intentions; having no interest to serve, nor any vanity to indulge: and above all, in the assistance and blessing of Almighty God, who can make the weakest instruments subservient to his praise and glory.

My aim is, to draw you from the principles and practices of the *Methodists*, and from your attendance on such teachers, as I am persuaded have hitherto misled you. Not that we desire that you should be less strict and punctual in your duty; less pious, less humble, or less charitable. Believe me, it is very great injustice to insinuate, that any necessary doctrines or duties of christianity are neglected to be inculcated and taught in our churches. You have been greatly deceived, if you have been told that we rest in the outward form and shell of religion, and are strangers to the real power of godliness, or neglect to insist upon it as it deserves. We have been much misrepresented, i

ported of us, (as we have great reason to fear it has) that the love of God and our neighbour are not sufficiently pressed by us, or that we place religion in any thing else. The assistances of the blessed Spirit to strengthen our weakness, and the satisfaction of our dear Redeemer to reconcile us to his heavenly Father, are both maintained and taught among us. All merit and glorying in ourselves is excluded. So that you need not fear hearing in our churches all things *pertaining to life and godliness*: You need not go elsewhere for necessary instruction, and exhortations to a life of piety and virtue.

In what then lies the difference between us? What can be the reason of those many reproaches, which we have heard and read, and by which we apprehend you have been staggered and misled? I shall endeavour, my brethren, in the spirit of meekness and holy fear, to caution you against the chief of these: and make manifest to you the weakness of the pretences of your teachers.

Of Regeneration.

ONE of the first things they gave out, was, That the doctrines of the gospel

pel were not sufficiently taught. They insisted particularly, that the necessary subject of *Regeneration* had been neglected: Accordingly, they for some time pressed this in almost all their discourses. You yourselves shall be judges, how just and true this charge is. *Regeneration* has been by some divines thought twofold, *Baptismal* and *Spiritual*. The former is the inward part of the sacrament of *Baptism*, the thing signified thereby, *i. e.* the change of state, the readmittance to the favour of God, and the privileges of the gospel. And this appears to be the scriptural sense of the word, which antiquity and our church entirely receive. The other is, the conversion of the heart from its natural or acquired corruption to the love and fear of Almighty God, and a sincere desire and endeavour to conform in all things to his wise and holy commandments.

It cannot be wondered, that the clergy of our church omitted to preach up the necessity of the *Baptismal Regeneration*. The impropriety of this is plain at first sight. Our congregations must be supposed to consist of baptised persons: and it would be as absurd to exhort these to be regenerated in this sense, as to be baptised

tified again. This *Regeneration* has been already received, and cannot be repeated.

But did they sufficiently insist on the need of the other, the *Spiritual Regeneration*? Perhaps they did not all make use of this very word; and that because they might, and very rightly, think it here improperly applied. But was the thing itself, the substance of the doctrine, neglected? Did we forget to lay open the folly and danger of sinful courses, to rouse and awaken the conscience, and earnestly to exhort men to repentance and a new life? Were the threatnings and promises of the gospel negligently taught? And is not this the plainest, and most practical and edifying way of speaking upon these points? If your teachers mean any more by this *Regeneration*, than an actual conversion from bad courses to a good one, it may be hard to understand them. We therefore may appeal to yourselves, my brethren, whether in this respect you found any want of sound doctrine in our churches? and therefore, whether on this account you had any reason, either in whole or in part to leave us, and to be so fond of other instructors?

Do not imagine, that we are at all inclined to dispute about words. These indeed

deed ought always to be used in their proper, known, obvious sense, or else they will unavoidably occasion perplexities. And with regard to *Regeneration*, we are sure, that in Scripture, the writings of antiquity, and the offices, &c. of our church, it is seldom or never used to denote any thing but the change in Baptism. And tho' wicked men render themselves unworthy of the relation of sons of God, and forfeit the blessed privileges and advantages of this title; yet after Baptism they are no where called upon to be *born anew*, or to be *regenerated* again. We are sure, you can find no instances of this in the authorities I have now referred to: And therefore why should we not keep close to the ancient and scriptural way of speaking. However, if your teachers will apply the word *Regeneration* to signify the conversion and amendment of a sinner after Baptism, they must not, they cannot justly, accuse our clergy of disbelieving, or neglecting to maintain, the absolute necessity of this; which you must know they are perpetually inculcating upon their hearers.

It may be proper just to add on this head, that though in conformity to some

good writers, and to explain myself more clearly, I have used the distinction of *Regeneration Baptismal* and *Spiritual*; yet we must not so understand it, as if the *Baptismal Regeneration* was not also *Spiritual*. I fear you have been taught to believe, that when we maintain this, we go no farther than the outward work of baptising with water. Herein you are deceived; for we allow and plead, that the privileges, powers, and aids conveyed by the means of this, proceeds from the Holy Spirit; and our church makes them the inward part of this holy Sacrament.

Of Justification by Faith alone.

THIS is, my brethren, another doctrine, with regard to which the discourses of our present ministers have been represented as defective; nay, which they have been accused of disallowing, and preaching against. You must not hastily give credit to such charges. Weigh them carefully; and I trust you will see no reason to be influenced by them.

The doctrine of *Justification by Faith*, is justly esteemed to be one of the hardest parts of *St Paul's Epistles*. It is thought by the most learned men, to have been very early perverted by some of the first heretics,

retics, to the purposes of incontinence and libertinism. To these *St Peter* most probably alluded, charging them with *wresting*, through their ignorance and unsteadiness, these, as well as other *scriptures*, to *their own destruction*. And it was to correct these errors, and to put a stop to these misinterpretations of *St Paul*, that *St James* wrote his general Epistle, in which he determines as clearly as possible, that a *man is justified by works, and not by faith only*.

This therefore being so difficult a point, supposing our clergy had been sparing in teaching it, the question still would be, whether it be so proper food for weak christians: and whether their time and pains were not much more usefully employed in considering the plainer parts of scripture, and in pressing the necessity of those articles and duties, which are more fully revealed, and more easily understood. We want, I am sure, no other confirmation of what I have been saying, than the many different, nay, inconsistent accounts, which even thinking learned men have given of these matters. These have been much perplexed hereby: And can you think then that such points are to be apprehended by the common people? For my own part, I assure you, that

that when I have read what your principal teachers have wrote on these subjects, I have been generally puzzled and confused: and after as close attention as I was capable of giving, I have been at a loss to understand their meaning, or to reconcile together the several points they advance. And this has always led me to consider, with great concern and pity, the dreadful perplexities and difficulties which such teaching must occasion among the generality of christians, who cannot be supposed to have entered so deeply into these enquiries, or indeed to be capable of doing so. Our clergy therefore are certainly not to blame for not being more frequent in teaching *Justification by faith*, without *works*, than they have been. And I earnestly call upon you, my brethren, as you value the peace and satisfaction of your own minds, to study the plainer and more useful parts of scripture, such as point out your duty both to God and man, and lead not to *doubtful disputations*. Be not like those ignorant people, who admire things, because they do not understand them; but learn a just regard and value for those teachers, who chuse to frame their instructions and advices suitably to your capacities,

capacities, necessities, and circumstances in life.

Besides, the doctrines concerning *justification*, as they have been managed of late, have not only been liable to perplex the well-disposed, but to be perverted by wicked and profane men. You cannot but be sensible, what enemies these are to *good works*; how eagerly they catch at any pretences to excuse their iniquities, and silence their consciences. And pray consider, whether the telling them, that they may, nay must, be *justified* without and before all *good works*, be not the likely way to have this bad effect. May they not also be led to imagine their souls in a safe condition without them? Supposing this conclusion wrong, which yet I cannot see, yet we can scarce hope, that it will not be made. And how dangerous then must such doctrines be, how subversive of true morality and virtue; even allowing, (which is more than I can grant) that many nice explications and distinctions would shew them to be safe and innocent? A point which so much wants these, is not fitted for a carnal and wicked world.

From hence therefore, my brethren, you may see which teachers have been
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most judicious and commendable, and worthy to be heard and followed; which have best consulted the peace of mens minds, and the credit and practice of goodness; *Yours*, who have lately brought these contested, these intricate, these dangerous points into the pulpit, or *our regular clergy*, who have contented themselves with instructing their flock in christian duties, and laying down the terms of salvation in a more plain, satisfactory, and edifying manner. This comparison we may submit to any one, and appeal even to yourselves to decide it. For after all,

Our clergy neither deny *Justification by faith*, in the true and just sense, nor have been wanting in inculcating it. They have been indeed very frequently charged with departing from the doctrines of the reformation, and with contradicting the Articles of our church, on this head. But there is not the least foundation for such a charge. If it does not proceed from gross ignorance, we can impute it to nothing but perverseness and malice. Let me beg you to attend to the following considerations, and I can make no doubt but you will be convinced of this.

At the time of the reformation, (as is natural to suppose) the principal errors which

which the church pointed at, and guarded against, were those of Popery, which had so long prevailed. Among these, several superstitious and uncommanded works had been insisted upon; as pilgrimages, masses, trentals, &c. These were then stiled *good works*. An undue stress has also been placed even on such *good works* as God had really enjoined. Besides, all these were thought meritorious. These false notions the reformers had great reason to condemn. They justly considered them as lessening the honour of our Redeemer, and taking off mens trust and confidence in the all-sufficient merits of his life and death, to place it on any of their own imperfect and defective services. They knew that these, however necessary to qualify us for God's favour, and to render us acceptable unto him, yet could no way deserve mercy or reward; could make no atonement for sin, nor even endure the severity of God's judgement; but that after we have done all we can, we must (having all sinned, and being still frail and imperfect) rest on Christ's merits alone, and stedfastly believe in him for our pardon, acceptance, and right to our reward. This is what the church means by declaring that we are *justified by faith*

faith only, and the whole that she means by it; as you may be satisfied if you will carefully read the Article itself, and the Homilies of Salvation, which this refers to, and in which she as expressly as possible declares this to be her sense. You will find, that *good works* are no way excluded from *Justification*, but as being meritorious or deserving. The necessity of them in every one, who is justified or received to God's favour, is all along supposed and insisted on; notwithstanding they cannot of themselves give us any claim to mercy; though all the hopes which we have of this must be by covenant and promise: and tho' we must believe and rely only on the goodness of God, and on the merits of our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus, as the great and sure foundation of all the benefits we do or can enjoy.

And now, my dear brethren, you may of yourselves judge how much we have been injured. For do our clergy deny any of these points? Are they wanting in teaching this true sense of the Article? Have you heard among us any of the arrogant claims of Popery, against which our church protests? Have you been led by our sermons to doubt of the efficacy of our Redeemer's satisfaction; or to trust in any thing

thing but his perfect obedience, his holy life, his precious cross and passion? These are the doctrines of salvation, and we know, that in general we cannot be justly accused of negligence in inculcating them upon the hearts and minds of our hearers. And by inculcating them, we teach all that our church understands by being *justified by faith only*: and we apprehend, we do this in a manner least liable to be perverted, and most easy to be understood.

But we own, that *good works* are *conditions* of our *Justification*. And this has given great offence; and you have been taught to believe, that this is the same with saying, that they are meritorious; and that it is contrary to the doctrine of our church. But in both these points you are deceived. The word *condition* implies no merit, supposes no more than the necessity of *good works*; no more than that we cannot be pardoned and accepted without performing them: or at least without being sincerely resolved and desirous to perform them, as we have power and opportunity.

Suppose the case of a King and some rebellious subjects; these have lost all title to his favour and protection, have forfeited their lives to the law, and cannot

not claim or demand their pardon. But he, out of his own grace and goodness, and in regard to the intercession of his only and well-beloved son, condescends to promise his mercy, and even his rewards, to all those who will return to their duty and obedience: and who will, in regard to some weaknesses and imperfections, and failures, to which they will ever be subject, implore the continuance of that intercession, and humbly rely upon it. — Is it not here plain, that their returning to their duty is the necessary as well as most fit and proper condition of their pardon? And yet will any one say, that there is any merit in this, or that it, strictly and properly speaking, obliged or even induced the King to grant it, or the promise of it? Can it be pretended, that the making this condition was to put their future duty any way on a level with his own good-will towards them, and a mediation so worthy of regard as that of his son? Apply this, and you must be convinced, that the word *condition*, when used on the present subject, has nothing so hurtful in it as you have been made to believe.

Nor is it at all contrary to the doctrine of our church. The Article concerning
Justification

Justification excludes *good works* only as putting away our sins, or as deserving of pardon and reward; consequently not as conditions.—That intitled, *Of works before Justification*, declares, “That works
 “ before grace have the nature of sin; in
 “ not being done as God hath willed and
 “ commanded them to be done:” Now this is very true, but nothing to the present argument. — Another Article says, that “good works *follow* Justification.” This seems most for your purpose, so that if they are not previous to it, they cannot be conditions of it. But this consequence is not strictly just. For there may be conditions subsequent to the first vouchsafing any grace or favour, and yet requisite to the continuing or preserving it. — Neither can you conclude from hence, that no *good works* are prior to our *Justification*. There are two ways of explaining this clause.

1. That the good works here mentioned, are *external* good works only, such as alms, &c. which a good man before his Justification may have no opportunity to discharge. And you may please to observe, that the Article itself countenances this interpretation; speaking of such *works* by which a *lively faith* may be

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as evidently known, as a tree is by its fruits.

These must be outward ones, such as can appear to men. — All this may be acknowledged without any prejudice to the supposition, that the *inward* good works, such as repentance, patience, hope, love, and many others, are previous conditions of our *Justification*.

2. This Article may be understood in another sense. As God sees the heart of man, whenever he finds a change wrought therein, and the sinner sincerely resolved, by the grace of his Holy Spirit, to leave his evil courses, and to lead a new life of piety and virtue, he may be pleased to justify, *i. e.* to pardon, and accept him to his favour; tho' as yet the man cannot be supposed to have fulfilled any of his resolutions, nor even to be certain of his own sincerity. And such a one's condition must be owned to be safe, should he be taken out of this world before he has opportunity to fulfil them. Inasmuch as *good works* would have sprung out of such a true and lively *faith*; such *works* as are most *pleasing and acceptable* to God in Christ; and the very same which God *had always ordained*, that men *should walk in*. Such appears to have been the case of the thief upon the cross; and of all new converts

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to christianity, who may die suddenly after baptism. Nay, this is all we can say in favour of a death-bed repentance.

But neither will this be any objection against the point I have been endeavouring to instruct you in. Many good dispositions, which must be thought good works, are also here supposed to be previously necessary. Consider seriously and truly, what is implied in this change of heart. Is not the love and fear of God, a perfect contrition and repentance, prayers for pardon, and resolutions of living better? And if no more is then required to *Justification*, the reason is, because no more could in such circumstances be performed. For other duties, were it possible then to practise them, would have been equally necessary conditions.

There are some other ways of explaining this article, which learned men have given. Some have understood by *Justification* here, *grace* in general: and in this sense there is no difficulty, all being ready to own, that all *good works* must follow *grace*.—Another sense is, that as *Justification* certainly commences ordinarily in baptism, which in our church is most usually administered to infants; consequently all *good works* must be subsequent to it:

or

or in the case of adults, that all *good works*, which are properly *christian works*, must be after baptism, *i. e.* after the state of Justification is begun.

Every one of these opinions is more likely to be the true one, than that, which excludes all *good works* from being conditions of our *Justification*; which overturns their necessity at once; and is directly contrary to numberless clear passages of our Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies; wherein this necessity is supposed and insisted upon. I would not determine which of the senses is the most just and proper; but I would observe to you from the very variety of them, that there is an acknowledged difficulty in the clause. And I leave you to think with yourselves, whether the doctrine and meaning of our church be more easily known from the interpretation which your teachers have given of this one clause, (which is also capable of so many other interpretations) rather than from many clear passages, or from the whole tenor and design of her Offices. Ought not these to be our rule, by which we should explain one obscure sentence.

My good brethren, I trust, I have now shewn sufficiently, how much you have
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been abused by hard words, and vain pretences. And truly it would be very easy to shew, that our *reformers* in their other writings acknowledged the necessity of *good works*, in the same sense in which we contend for them. And they who set them aside *as conditions*, are really not the followers of our eminent divines, but rather of *Owen, Jacomb, Sheppard, Bunyan*, and others of that stamp and character.—But a multitude of citations would not be consistent with my intended brevity, and therefore I pass to another point.

Of the Operations of the Holy Spirit.

WITH regard to this particular also, you have been very grossly and may be fatally deluded. If you have been made to believe, that the necessity of the assistance and concurrence of this blessed Person is not taught in our churches, both you and we have been very ill used. But we own, we cannot go the lengths which your teachers have here run into. And if you will coolly and impartially weigh the following considerations, I think, we may submit it to yourselves, whether you have any reason to blame our conduct, or to leave our churches on this account. You

You cannot but be acquainted with the distinction between the *extraordinary*, and more common and *ordinary* aids of the *Holy Ghost*. The first comprehended immediate inspirations, by which G O D reveals some particular truths or articles not known before: and miraculous powers, by which he enables the persons, whom he honours with such revelations, to declare them to the world, and to prove that he has sent them to declare them.—The others contain the renewal of our liberty, the graces of sanctification and adoption conferred in baptism, as well as good motions, comforts, and assistances vouchsafed afterwards. These two kinds are very distinct, and ought never to be confounded. They are severally granted, in proportion to the necessities of the world. Before christianity was sufficiently planted and established, and while it had all sorts of discouragements, prejudices, and persecutions to struggle with; the *extraordinary* gifts were wanted, and accordingly vouchsafed. But when our religion had been sufficiently proved, and had gained a settlement in the world, these were no longer necessary; and accordingly ceased.—The others, the ordinary gifts, being always necessary

necessary in every age of the church, and to every particular christian, G o d has promised to continue them to the end.— It is plain then, that whatever claims or pretences may be made to *extraordinary* revelations, we are to give no sort of credit to them, unless they are proved by miracles. It would be great weakness, as well as great presumption, to do so. Even when God vouchsafed these gifts to his Apostles, He did not require that they should be believed on their bare words, but furnished them with miracles to justify their commission. And much more therefore shall we now demand the same reasonable satisfaction of the truth of such pretences, whenever made; as we have much less cause to expect or believe, that such extraordinary favours will be now vouchsafed. Assertions in this case, how confident, how repeated soever, signify just nothing.

Here therefore, are two things for you to consider, 1. Whether your teachers have not spoke and acted as if they pretended to these *extraordinary* gifts. 2. Whether they have given you any sort of proof, that they have actually received such. No one who has read their Journals, can doubt of the former fact. You

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cannot but be convinced, that they have very frequently laid claim to *extraordinary* communications, directions, calls, &c. And there is reason to fear, that many ignorant, well-meaning people have been thus seduced. They have talked in the stile of apostles, and as if they had been immediately commissioned to preach throughout the whole world; or rather to revive and recover the knowledge and practice of true christianity, which had been in a manner lost and extinguished. All this, if they cannot evince such commission by miracles, is downright *enthusiasm*. And yet, far from doing so, when they have been called upon for this proof, or prest in dispute to explain themselves, they have then pretended only to a common *ordinary* commission and assistances.

And is not this plainly contradicting and condemning themselves? Will these powers and gifts justify the language they have frequently used? No, my brethren, in no wise. These powers and gifts your parish ministers have received, as well as they. But they dare not talk in such language, lest they should deceive you into an opinion, that they have been more particularly and eminently favoured from heaven. We beg you to consider, that
religion

religion is a sober, reasonable service, a work of the understanding and judgement, as well as of the heart and affections; and that you are not to follow any one on account of his confident boasting or pretences, but may and ought to *try the spirits*, examining into his pretensions, and if he cannot produce his proofs of these, to turn from him as an *enthusiast* and *deceiver*.

And as to the common *ordinary* operations of the Spirit, you have here likewise been much deluded. You have been taught, that the grace of *Justification* is conferred on believers in a sudden, instantaneous, irresistible manner; and that we must judge of this, as well as of our *Regeneration*, by sensible impulses, impressions, ardors, extasies, which we feel within us. These, we are convinced, may proceed from very different causes, and are therefore not to be depended upon. Scripture does not any where promise them, or lay any stress upon them. Bad men may know them, good men may want them. They are therefore no signs or marks of the Spirit. The sure way of knowing that we have received this, is of a very different nature. If you are sincerely desirous of learning

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and doing God's will; if you truly love, and fear, and obey him; you may be fully assured, that you are in a state of grace and favour, that your sins are pardoned, and that you will be finally justified and everlastingly rewarded by him, on supposition that you continue to your lives end in doing so. These are the true feelings, the experience of the genuine fruits of the spirit, enumerated by *St Paul*; which may be entirely relied upon as certain proofs, that we have received the Spirit. No others can be either defended or explained; though there never was any *enthusiast* who did not pretend to the other sensations. — I might here shew, that even your own writers, when they have treated these points more coolly and considerately, or been vindicating themselves, have contended only for the feeling, *i. e.* the consciousness of our virtues, have allowed the precariousness of all other impulses; or at least have pleaded for the divine original of these, merely from their leading to piety and goodness.

Do not therefore suffer yourselves to be any longer deceived in these matters. You may be persuaded, that you were *regenerated* and *born anew* in your baptism;

tism; you may know that you are *justified*, or admitted to mercy and favour, and intitled to everlasting happiness; not only by having been baptised, but by living in an honest discharge of your duty, and in an humble and sincere performance of the terms and conditions of the christian covenant; and from hence also you may know that God has given you his Spirit, without which you could do none of these things. If this be your case, you may be comforted, have peace in your mind, and *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*, whom you thus love. But if you be otherwise minded, let no sensible feelings or extasies flatter you into a false security; or tempt you ever to imagine, that you have *received the Spirit*, that you are *justified*, or that you *love God*. Remember, that it is the *keeping his commandments*, which the scripture has made the express and infallible mark of our doing so.

Another error, which you must guard against, is the supposing the helps of the Spirit to be *irresistable*, that our wills are violently over-ruled by his grace, and therefore, that we have nothing to do, but to wait for this. Whatever opinions are inconsistent with the supposi-

tion of our liberty, cannot but be subversive of all piety and religion. For if we are not free, neither are we accountable as moral agents; neither can we be subject to any law; nor are, properly speaking, subjects of rewards and punishments. Free-will therefore is as necessary to be maintained as *divine grace*. And indeed, they are both very consistent and reconcileable. And therefore, *St Paul* makes the divine concurrence an argument for our own diligence. He exhorts and enjoins us to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*; for this very reason, because *it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do*. If you ask, how are these things to be explained and accounted for? I answer, you have no occasion to be any way troubled, though you cannot explain the manner, how God works in and with us, how he renews our liberty, or strengthens us *by his Spirit in the inner man*. You have his own word for it that he does both. Your duty therefore is plain, both with regard to faith and practice. You are to believe, that you are *free*, and yet that this freedom proceeds from *divine grace*; which also is farther vouchsafed to you in proportion to your necessities,

cessities, infirmities, and improvements. And you are to endeavour as strenuously as if you depended wholly upon yourselves; and yet to distrust yourselves, to call always upon God for his aid and blessing by fervent prayer, and to ascribe all the good you do to him; as being conscious that of yourselves, (without his especial grace) you can do nothing, and that your *sufficiency is of God*.

But perhaps it will be said, that this is pleading for *self-righteousness*. This is a word of late much used among you. Those who oppose your teachers in their extravagancies, have been reproached with the title of *self-righteous*. But let me beseech you, my fellow-christians, not to be led away by mere words. This in particular, is one of doubtful meaning. It may be understood of those who presumptuously depend upon their own *works*, without acknowledging the necessity of *faith* in *Christ's propitiation*, or of the *grace* of God. And in this sense it is indeed a very bad thing to be *self-righteous*. But we are no way chargeable with it, who allow and rely upon both. It may be also understood of those who allow their *good works* to be meritorious. But neither are we affected hereby, who

renounce all merit, who own the imperfection of our best services, and lament our failures and sins. How far they are in this respect *self-righteous*, who plead for *sinless perfection*, it becomes them to consider.—Why then is this title so often thrown at us? Is it because we plead for the necessity of our honest and sincere endeavours? But the glory of all we ascribe to God's Spirit. We have no sufficiency, no righteousness, *as of ourselves*. But we must be righteous *in ourselves*; or else *we shall all perish*. In this sense, the word *self-righteous* implies nothing bad: and thus only can you charge us with being so. And would to God, that you, and we, and every one, were thus truly and unfeignedly *self-righteous*; i. e. that we would all study, thro' the blessed assistance of God's grace, to be humble and penitent, pious and devout, sober, just, and charitable. Then only may we be assured of an interest in *Christ's* righteousness; that we shall receive the benefits He has procured for us; that we shall, for the sake of his merits, be graciously accepted by our *righteous Lord*, who *loveth* this *righteousness*; and be finally and gloriously rewarded by him.

And

And thus, my brethren, have I set forth in the plainest manner, my sentiments on these important points. And I think I may appeal to yourselves, whether they are not consistent with truth and godliness; and whether you have not been misled concerning them. Be therefore so much your own friends, as to take them into your coolest consideration. Examine what has been said carefully; and if you find it agreeable to scripture, as I trust you will, be not led to reject or despise it. Let not your teachers hinder you from reading these papers impartially. Should they endeavour to do it, you may remember that this is itself a sign that they are in the wrong; that they dare not trust you to examine and consider the particulars objected to them, but would be implicitly believed and regarded by you. But I hope you will refuse to be thus led blindfold. At least hear and judge both sides. They ought to allow you this right and liberty.

What has been offered deserves to be well weighed; nor should be set aside, before you are convinced it is wrong and unreasonable.

If I have vindicated our clergy, and compared them with yours, you must not take this amiss. These have by their boasting and censures compelled me to do this: and it was impossible to deceive you without doing it. For indeed my motive was not so much a regard to our regular ministers, as to yourselves; my design was not so much to do justice to them, but (God is my witness) to secure and promote your present and everlasting welfare.

I bear you record, that you have a zeal of God; but, my brethren, it is not according to knowledge or judgement. Were your eyes once opened, would you once without affection or prejudice consider the points wherein we disagree, I should hope, that you might approve the soundness of our doctrine; and acknowledge, that nothing really conducing to edification is neglected to be taught among us. Nor can I suppose, that you would stand out against conviction, or persist in what you cannot vindicate, in what you must acknowledge to be erroneous and blamable.

Let me remind you of the progress of *Methodism* since its first appearing. This alone should persuade you to retreat in time.

time. How are your teachers altered from what they professed at first? A peculiar strictness and regularity; a decent observance of the rules of our church, were what they then desired to be distinguished by: And then many good men countenanced and approved of them. And had they continued to have acted so, no serious person could have blamed them. They were then allowed our pulpits and churches on any occasion. But it was not long that they kept within these bounds. This spirit of modesty, and regard to order and decency, soon forsook them. Being admired and followed, they became vain and conceited, Hence they proceeded to open censures and contempt of their brethren. General charges against our clergy were published, as if they neglected to teach true christianity. At last, these were obliged to deny them the use of their pulpits, unless they would be content to have their people perplexed with intricate and dangerous doctrines. This opened their mouths still wider; and made them more loud and furious in their accusations and railings. They also made the most presumptuous and unwarrantable pretences to *divine communications*, and *directions*;

such

such as no common assistances of God's Spirit, nor the ordinary call to the ministry could justify. — However, they were not hastily given up. Several things were written to reclaim them. Some of the highest and most considerable of our clergy pointed out their errors with all possible meekness and temper. — What did all these produce? Saucy and petulant answers; fresh bitterness; more arrogant boasting; more uncharitable revilings. At last they broke out into still worse extravagancies. Our churches being by this time, and on these accounts, generally denied them, they seized a pulpit or two without leave: and at last, in defiance of the law, exercised their ministry in fields and commons, and other unlicensed places. They likewise set aside and altered * the Liturgy at their pleasure, and made use of *extempore effusions* of their own in the pub-

* Particularly, in the administration of the *Lord's Supper*, wherein at the *distribution* of the *Elements*, the custom of some of them is to pronounce only the words, *The body of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and *The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ*; leaving out the remainder, of what the Rubric of our Liturgy expressly prescribes to be said by the minister, when he *delivereth to any one the bread and cup*.

tic worship of GOD: and in this they have persisted, in contradiction to their subscription to *The Book of Common Prayer* at the time of their ordination, whereby they engaged in the most solemn manner to “use the form in the said book prescribed in the public Prayer, and administration of the Sacraments, and none other.”

When they had presumed to go these lengths, it is no wonder, they should take the liberty to condemn those excellent writings, *The Whole Duty of Man*, and Archbishop Tillotson's works; nor that they should afterwards fall from one error to another, and divide among themselves in points of the last moment, as in fact they have done. Some of them have since run about the country teaching and exhorting, without any orders or authority, learning or judgement, distressing the minds of poor, ignorant, well-meaning people; throwing some into despair, others into presumption, and many into madness. Some have hereby been exposed to all the perplexities of *Calvinism*; others have been led away by the extravagant opinions of a set of people who call themselves *Moravians*.

This

This is a true, though a melancholly account. And can you look back on all this, and believe it proceeds from the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth and order, of love and unity? Review all these consequences; lay them seriously to heart: You must sure allow it high time to stop and retreat.

It is out of no personal dislike or ill-will to any of these men, that I have thus laid open their proceedings. It is for your sakes, my brethren, to induce you to withdraw from them, before things grow more deplorable. I could wish they themselves would consider the danger of their present sentiments and method. I am sure, they are greatly concerned to join with me in advising you to return to your duty, and indeed to set you a pattern and example. But supposing that they should obstinately persist in their errors and irregularities (which God forbid) yet this will be no excuse for you to follow them any longer.

You must not form an opinion of them from the great zeal they express, or the great pains they take, in going about the world, and preaching their doctrines. This, I doubt, has made many of you admire and follow them.

Whatever

Whatever be the true motives of this behaviour, (for I will not accuse them of any bad or sinister ones) this is no just rule for your judgement. If their *speech* be not *sound*, and their practices regular, all their industry and labour will not justify your going after them; will not prove the truth of their pretences; will only enable them to do the greater mischief.

Their doctrines I have already disproved. I will now consider their practice. And, believe me, religion is best propagated in a regular way. It was not without very great reason, that parishes were founded, and men placed in several districts. The appointment of ministers to the care of their respective bounds, is as old as christianity. *Titus*, you read, was left by *St Paul* in *Crete*; who was also to *appoint elders*, or priests under him, in *every city*, to minister to the christians therein. *Timothy* was set over *Ephesus*; and others were fixed at other places. And though the Bishops and Clergy of one place frequently received others to their communion, nay, *gave them the right hand of fellowship*, as a testimony of their preaching the same gospel; yet I do not remember any instance of a minister, after the Apostles, who ever so pretended

tended to any unlimited commission to preach throughout the world, as to break in upon the provinces intrusted to others, and to draw away their people after them, under pretence of neglect or inability in those others, or on any other account. And I am persuaded, that if any such instance had then happened, he would have been opposed and withstood by the regular settled pastors of those times, as a proud contentious man; and this universal liberty would have been condemned, as making unlawful inroads on the original appointments; as being destructive of peace, regularity, and order in the church; and tending to introduce the dreadful evils of confusion and enthusiasm.

This then being the case from the beginning, you are to consider, that the pains your preachers have taken in preaching up and down the world, without any particular designation, (breaking in upon the provinces of others, and inveigling or seducing their flocks from them) should be so far from recommending them to you, that it is in itself very blameable; and would have been esteemed so in the first and purest ages of christianity. Think therefore whether you ought in the least to countenance them; whether in

in doing this, you do not real dishonour to religion, and hurt the order and peace of the church.

Let me caution you against one art of delusion, which they have frequently practised; I mean, the applying to you in all manner of tender, wheedling expressions. They write to you, and of you, as the dearest children of God, the precious lambs of Christ. This is laying hold of your affections, instead of applying to your reason. The end and design of it is, to keep you biassed and prejudiced toward them. But you ought to be upon your guard against all such insinuations; which are not only apt to prevent your making a just and proper enquiry, and judging impartially, but have a further ill tendency to puff up your minds, and to inspire contempt of others, of whom they usually speak in a very different manner. Though flattery and fawning be too generally successful, as being an application to the soft and weak parts of our nature; yet all wise men know, that it is much to be suspected, as seldom coming without some ill design.

I cannot therefore, I dare not, use any such appellations. And yet, if I know my own heart, I have no other end in
writing

writing this address but your good. Receive it therefore as it is meant. In the present case, surely, the clergy may be believed, when they say, *they seek not yours, but you*. We are very sensible, that the generality of you are poor. Nor can we expect or desire such contributions from you as you have of late paid : to whom, or to what purposes, we do not pretend to say ; but certainly on account of your being admitted to the *meetings* or *assemblies* of your present teachers.

But this reminds me of another piece of necessary and wholesome advice. That you would honestly and diligently attend to the business of your several stations and callings, and labour to provide for yourselves and families. While you do this, you are serving your Creator, as well as yourselves and the public ; and if you neglect it, your good intentions will not be sufficient to excuse you. Your duty to God ought indeed to have the first and chief place in your thoughts and affections : nor should any business tempt you to neglect it. But there is no sort of necessity or occasion, that this should set aside a just and prudent application to our respective trades and callings. I am sorry to say, there have been several instances

stances of this known among you. Some have deserted their business, and some their very country. How far this may have been owing to the principles or the instructions of their teachers, I cannot say. It is certain, that it has been a consequence of the prevailing of *Methodism*. And nothing can be a more deplorable injury to society, than the taking the poor off from their labours, or the indisposing them in any respect to go thro' them. Let me therefore guard you against so pernicious an error, by persuading you, in whatever way or rank providence has placed you, to mind your business, to be industrious and hearty in the discharge of it: and then contentedly and chearfully to wait for success and blessing from Almighty God.

From this article of business, I proceed to add a word or two concerning *diversions* and *pleasures*. And here, my brethren, I must commend you for avoiding and abstaining from all such as are vain, wicked, dangerous, hurtful, or imprudent. You must not imagine that we contend for, or can allow any such. But then, there are other diversions, which are both innocent, and sometimes proper: which contribute both to the health
of

of the body, and to the vigour of the mind, and which seem to be intended by God to enable us the better to return to the cares or fatigues of business. These ought not to be condemned: nor should any wise or good man be censured for a moderate and seasonable use of them. You have therefore been much misled, when you have been taught to reject all such, and to take no pleasure in any thing but your duty. This, we own, gives a good christian the highest and most unspeakable joy. But as we are at present formed, it cannot be doubted, that a perpetual attention to business and duty, without some interruptions, and relaxations, cannot be long supported: that our faculties will require some other refreshment, or otherwise become weak and feeble, and unfit for their several offices. You need not therefore always, and indiscriminately, refrain from all diversions. There are several, which you need neither be ashamed nor afraid to partake of; which will ease the body, and unbend the mind; which will prevent your growing melancholly, inspire cheerfulness, conduce to your improvement, and make you capable of going through your business and duty with
more

more life and spirit. And all the caution which you need take in this respect, is, not to engage so far in any diversions, as to let your thoughts and desires be too much fixed upon them; not to suffer them to set aside any thing necessary; not to spend too much time, or too much money, in the pursuit of them. A right choice being made, and these rules observed, they may do much good, but can do no harm. Religion being intended to advance our comfort and happiness, needs not wear a melancholly garb, nor assume a forbidding, discouraging, unnatural appearance. Nor ought any one to put you under more restraints than the law of God has done, either for a *shew* or *proof* of your having more religion than those have, who do all they can to *walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the gospel blameless*.

I leave you to consider this; and perhaps your minds may so be delivered from unnecessary doubts and scruples. However, if you should be determined to avoid all diversions whatever, remember, that this is matter of inclination and choice, but not of duty: that you are never the wiser or the better christians for thus avoiding them; and that you
cannot

cannot, without great uncharitableness, accuse or censure any other persons, who continue innocently and prudently to partake of them.

Having now considered the points I intended to lay before you; nothing remains, but to conclude with a most affectionate exhortation. Though I hope you are not quite *alienated* in your minds from us, yet you have been too long *estranged* from the generality of your fellow-christians, and especially prejudiced against those who are *appointed* to *watch* and *rule* over you; whose *hearts desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved*; and who beg to be *remembered* and *considered* by you, as they that are to *give account* unto the great *shepherd and bishop of your souls*. Many of you have entirely left your parish-churches. Others, when they have repaired to them, have come too much prejudiced to receive due benefit from the doctrine there delivered. These prejudices have been artfully instilled into you. Some of you have been known to complain, that we are fed in our churches with nothing but husks and chaff; and that the doctrines of salvation through *Christ Jesus* are not taught therein. Your mistakes and ignorance in these matters,

matters, I have endeavoured to remove and correct. The true notions concerning the chief particulars in dispute have been laid before you. Judge but coolly and fairly, and you must be convinced, that nothing can be more false and injurious, than the charges and reflections which have been raised against us on this occasion.

Let me therefore call upon you, my brethren, in the name of God, to return to the constant communion of the church, to discard those errors, by which so many have been perplexed: and to leave those teachers, who have hitherto deluded you with vain pretences. Come, as most of you did heretofore, to your parish-churches constantly and seriously, with humble, open, and unbiassed minds; and then you will be most effectually satisfied, that true christianity is inculcated therein, and that every article and duty of it are, by turns, vindicated, proved, explained, and pressed upon the conscience. Nothing can be more becoming and commendable in you, than a concern for the *one thing needful*, your *everlasting salvation*; and God forbid I should go about to lessen it. A true sense of the guilt and danger of sin, as well as a right belief

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lief of God's love to mankind, in sending his blessed Son to redeem us, are what you may hear among us almost continually insisted on: and we desire nothing more than to improve and confirm you in *grace*, and in the *knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*: So that you may grow in *both*, and bring forth the fruits of *both*, in an holy and pious *conversation*, and a regular practice of your duty both to God and man; that you may finally *escape the wrath to come*, and receive the reward of honour, glory, and immortality.

I once more affectionately beseech, and from my heart intreat you to consider very carefully what has been said. And may *the Lord give you a right judgement and understanding in all things*: and *bring into the way of truth all such as have erred, and are deceived*.

Believe me to be, though unknown, and resolved to remain so,

10 FEB 58
My BRETHREN,

Your sincere and faithful Friend,

and Servant in our Lord Jesus,

A. B.

